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Accurate Intelligence Reports Ignored In Pakistan War, Secret Notes Reveal

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WASHINGTON — As in the Vietnam war, American intelligence information before and during the India-Pakistan conflict generally was accurate, but apparently was ignored by White House policymakers.

This became evident in interviews with American officials, on the scene in India and Bangladesh, who referred to their secret messages to Washington.

The conclusion is supported by the minutes of secret strategy sessions here, which have been released in full by columnist Jack Anderson.

FURTHERMORE, Michigan Congressman Lucien Nedzi, Democratic chairman of an armed services subcommittee on intelligence, said: "My reviews so far suggest to me the biggest problem is the use, or the lack of use, the executive makes of intelligence."

In the Indo-Pakistan war, as on other occasions, Nedzi said, "One gets the impression that policy is made in the President's bedroom."

Nedzi explained that he meant that President Nixon is engaging in "one-man" policy-making, which does not take into account the opinions of the intelligence community and the state department.

American officials here and in India complained that during the Indo-Pakistan war, intelligence experts and experienced State Department personnel were removed from policy making. Among those excluded were consuls and even Kenneth Keating, the ambassador to India, they said.

AS A RESULT of the gap

between intelligence information and policy-making, the White House insisted on an anti-India, pro-Pakistan policy and ended up on the losing side, U.S. officials in Washington and overseas said.

The Pentagon study of the Vietnam war disclosed that the Central Intelligence Agency and other intelligence gatherers correctly assessed the strength of the Communists, the relative ineffectiveness of American bombing, and the weaknesses in the "domino theory" — the belief that if South Vietnam fell to the Communists, the rest of Southeast Asia would follow.

Similarly, American officials stationed as political observers and intelligence gatherers in India and East Pakistan are bitter that their information was ignored by the White House.

Consequently, they say, the White House underestimated:

- ❶ The effects of the Pakistani reign of terror in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) that resulted in a guerrilla war for independence and the Indian invasion.

- ❷ The determination of Indian prime Minister Indira Gandhi to aid Bangladesh and return to the new country the 10 million refugees who fled to India from the Pakistani terror.

- ❸ The improvement of the Indian armed forces since 1965, when they suffered defeat at the hands of American-equipped Pakistanis.

The officials maintain that the White House, paying closer attention to reports of the ambassador to Pakistan, misunderstood the role of the East Pakistan Awami League. They say the White House failed to realize that the league, which bore the brunt of the terror campaign (its leader, Sheik Mujibur Rahman, was jailed) represented the moderate left, in opposition to Maoist Communists.

India, criticized by mainland China, primarily went to the aid of the Awami League, which meant that the U.S. inadvertently supported the more radical leftists in Bangladesh.

THE MINUTES of the Special Action Group meetings that were obtained by Anderson show that even in the early days of the 14-day war, the CIA and the Pentagon correctly predicted that the Indians would capture East Pakistan and recognize the Bangladesh government, but fight only a holding action on the borders of West Pakistan.

Nevertheless, national security adviser Henry Kissinger indicated that the President personally was making policy. The policy was apparently at odds with the intelligence.

State Department sources, apparently at the President's behest, continually voiced concern to reporters that India was bent on carrying the war into West Pakistan, when the intelligence officials were saying that front was "a holding action."

Kissinger told one meeting of the group:

"I am getting hell every half-hour from the President that we are not being tough enough on India. He has just called me again. He does not believe we are carrying out his wishes. He wants to tilt in favor of Pakistan. He feels everything we do comes out otherwise."